



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd

**Unit 1, Vincent Court
89/93 Soundwell Road
Staple Hill
Bristol
BS16 4QR**

Lead Inspector
Wilfried Maxfield

Announced Inspection
11-13 January 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd

Address Unit 1, Vincent Court
89/93 Soundwell Road
Staple Hill
Bristol
BS16 4QR

Telephone number 0117 957 3533

Fax number 0117 957 3573

Email address

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Ms Susan Claire Holdaway

Type of registration Fostering Agencies

No. of places registered (if applicable) 0

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 23rd February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd is an independent fostering agency that was established in June 2003 as a limited company. Prior to this it was a company limited by guarantee and began to provide a fostering service in 1999. It is affiliated to Pathway Care Ltd that has its headquarters in Cardiff having formed in response to local government reorganisation in Wales in 1996. The Pathway Care Group operates four regional branches in South East Wales, West Wales, the Midlands and Bristol. At the beginning of January 2006, 219 foster carers were working as part of the whole of the group. Overall 367 children and young people were placed with Pathway Care.

At the time of this inspection the Bristol office supported 20 approved foster homes offering a number and range of placements for either individual children or sibling groups for short term, bridging or on a long term basis. Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd offers foster placements for both male and female children and young people from birth to eighteen years available to local authority social services departments. 23 children and young people were placed at the time of inspection.

Therapeutic and support services for Pathway's foster carers and children placed with them are provided by an arm of the company based in Cardiff. This part of the service was established as a resource for therapeutic and training provision.

The headquarters for Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd is located in a modern business park in Soundwell, South Gloucestershire. The agency occupies two floors of a unit in the park that provides office accommodation and a large meeting room. This allows for foster carer training and provides a meeting space for support groups and space for contact time to take place between children and their families.

Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd previous joint Panel agreement with South Gloucestershire Social Services was reviewed in January 2005. Since then, the Bristol branch offices Panel business has been incorporated in to the organisations own joint Fostering Panel for Pathway Care Ltd and Pathway Care (West Wales)

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This inspection focused solely on the operations of the branch office Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd. However, this included attending a Foster Panel Meeting at the organisations Cardiff Head office as well as liaising with and interviewing the Quality Assurance Manager, who is also based in Cardiff with responsibilities across all of the four regional offices. The Panel visit also included the opportunity for a formal interview with the panel's chair and informal conversations with some of the panel members.

The Registered Manager (who is also one of the Assistant Director's of the company) of the Bristol Office assisted in every aspect of the inspection process. This included preparing a considerable amount of pre-inspection documentation and attending a pre-inspection meeting at the Commission together with the Quality Assurance Manager. The Registered Manager also provided access to essential records during the time of the inspection, helped to establish and facilitate contact with foster carers and young people and guided inspectors through any other of the finer detail of managing the Bristol Office.

Some of the recently reviewed and updated core policies (Child protection, Complaints) were studied as part of this report. The Carer's handbook was also scrutinized in depth.

All of the three Family Placement Supervising Social Workers (from now on referred to as FPSSW) based in Bristol were interviewed as part of this inspection. They assisted in all efforts to case track a sample of young people currently placed by the agency. A recently employed Family Outreach Worker was also interviewed.

Information gathered during file study and during interviews with FPSSW's was authenticated by visiting a number of foster families in their homes.

Time was spent with the Administration Manager in order to assess aspects of office management relevant to this inspection as well as explore the agencies IT systems and database.

The Human Resource officer supplied staffing files in person, held centrally in Cardiff on the first day of the inspection. She was also interviewed as part of this visit.

A very good return on the Commissions 'Foster Parent's and Children's Questionnaires' helped to collect opinions on how these respective groups view the levels of care and support.

This inspection was conducted over 3 days.

What the service does well:

Pathway Care Bristol team's commitment to Carer and Children's needs is excellent.

FPSSW's knowledge and insight in individual cases is excellent.

Professional focus and understanding of wider fostering issues, including reflective practise is excellent.

All Family Placement Supervising Social Workers are very highly regarded amongst foster carers. Feedback from foster carer's about the support they receive is excellent.

Annual appraisals systems and supervision support for staff are of the highest professional quality. FPSSW's are well supported.

The agency has an impressive range of policies and procedures covering all the important aspects of the service.

Record keeping and associated audit and monitoring tasks are of the highest professional standard.

Administration systems and administration support are excellent.

The branch is effectively and efficiently managed.

Foster Carers are well selected and trained and have the right skills and experience.

In questionnaires children report positively throughout about the care and services they receive.

Assessment expertise and quality assurance function of the 'Cardiff Panel' is impressive.

The Bristol office is commended for the engaging, transparent and efficient way in which it supported this inspection process. The agency fully complies

with all Regulations of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Subsequently no requirements needed to be made.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Children and young people can be assured that the Pathway Care Group will continue to maintain high quality foster homes through regular reviews of the approval of each foster parent in accordance with Regulation 29 of the Foster Carers Regulations.

Children and young people benefit from regular reviews and updates of a detailed Children's Guide, Young People's Guide and a 'Who we are and what we do' – 'Our Statement of Purpose' document. All of these booklets comply with National Minimum Standard 1.5 for Fostering Services.

Children and young people feeling concerned about any aspect of their placement have been better informed about the way and to whom they can complain since the organisation published a separate leaflet entitled 'Pathway Care Complaints Procedure - A guide for Children and Young People', (July 2005).

Children and young people can be assured that the agency maintains the highest standards when matching them to a foster family and records all available information ('matching forms') fully and appropriately on case records.

Children and young people can be assured that the Bristol team has regular and ongoing information sharing meetings and is fully aware of its obligation to ensure that all vital facts are communicated between the agencies FPSSW's and the child's or young person's social worker.

What they could do better:

Children or young people displaying traits dangerous to their health or wellbeing would feel better protected from harm to themselves if the impact of their behaviour was thoroughly risk assessed (as suggested in the agencies own 'Carer's Handbook, p.96) and this written assessment was being made available to foster carers.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12.

The agency maintains good systems and records to ensure children and young peoples' health care needs are met. Family Placement Social Workers and Foster Carers have the knowledge, systems and skills to support and promote children's and young people's health needs. The agency is commended for the way it supports particularly complex and challenging placements.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers visited were interviewed and asked about the exact health requirements and arrangements of the respective children and young people in their care. Responses given by foster carers were more than satisfactory and general awareness of specific medical needs of the children and young people in the particular sample visited were fully satisfactory. Case tracking a particularly complex young person on a home visit established very positive outcomes for the young person in question. Frequent hospital, therapy, GP and CAMHS (Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services) visits were supported in the most conscientious and dedicated way. The foster carer had received advice, training and a high level of constant support from the FPSSW and thus had been able to build up a commendable degree of expertise into the condition of the young person.

It is part of the foster carers duties to register children with a doctor, dentist and optician and attend to any further health appointments needed. Foster carers are also expected to ensure that any specialist health care services are attended to and the continuity of service is kept. However, none of the foster carers interviewed felt left 'alone' with this task and felt well supported by the fostering service. There was good evidence that foster carers are given all necessary logistical and information support to establish essential existing health services in specific children and young people's localities.

The agency makes every possible effort to obtain all of this information prior to the start of the placement from the responsible authority and passes it on to the carers. Tracking children's LAC review records showed that health issues were well recorded and discussed with foster carers.

Foster carers are provided with a written health record for each child, which is updated during the placement. These records were scrutinized in the sample of carers visited and found to be of good quality. This area was also well documented in the children's files inspected. Specific health records are available on children's and young peoples' case files as well as foster carer files. They have been designed to be able to track the flow of information, appointments and agreements made by the different parties.

All of the carer's duties and responsibilities in this area are clearly described and defined in the 'Carers Handbook'.

'Health care' features highly on foster carers training. This includes training in first aid and health and safety. Training programmes inspected showed a wide variety of health related courses on offer for foster carers.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30.

Pathway Care is commended for ensuring the safety of children and young people by employing rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures. The Registered person, FPSSW's and the Family Outreach Worker are suitably qualified, well managed, trained and supported. Foster homes provide safe, warm and nurturing environments. The agency ensures that appropriate carers are carefully matched with children and young people by means of robust and sound assessments. An expert panel ensures good quality assurance monitoring.

EVIDENCE:

The Registered Person, Assistant director leading and managing the Bristol office provided ample evidence that she has impressive child care and social work experience and qualifications to run operations necessitating to be fully dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. She is currently undertaking a MA in Management Studies run by Bristol Business School as part of the University of Bristol.

This report is consistent with findings in previous reports with regard to the good quality of foster care homes. Pathway Care takes all possible care to ensure safe, healthy and nurturing placements. Homes randomly visited at this inspection were of a very good standard. The Carers handbook gives advice on expected health and safety standards in individual homes and how to provide a

safe environment free from avoidable risk and hazards. Safety guidance and procedures for transporting children's in carers' cars is robust and sound. Foster carers training covers health and safety issues. Health and safety issues are included in the initial assessment of potential foster carers.

A number of individual cases were tracked to ensure that the best possible matching criteria had been applied in order to place the respective children and young people with the most appropriate carers. In case of the sample all of the criteria of NMS (National Minimum Standard) 8 were met by the agency. It was evident from written information and discussion with those involved with placements that the matching process, preparation and introduction are of a high standard. Substantial time is spent gathering information and matching the needs of children and young people with carers. Information sharing involves all professionals, child and birth family and prospective carers. Both Pathway Care and the respective Local Authority making the placement have written placement agreements, these were found on files and contained information on how needs will be met. Placement decisions consider and try to match racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs. Criteria are applied sensitively but also in a stringent manner.

A recently updated Child Protection Policy (22/09/2005) was available for inspection. This policy is consistent with Regulation 12 of the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standard 9 and has been issued to all staff and foster carers. Safe caring guidelines are provided for all foster homes based on the policies available in the Carers Handbook but also reflecting the needs of individually placed children and young people. Foster carers visited were aware of the particular vulnerabilities of their children or young people and had been provided with sufficient information to enable the carer to protect the young person.

Missing person procedures were case tracked in one randomly chosen sample. The agencies procedures were clear to the carers in question and had been effectively implemented during practical case conditions.

The Human Resources Department carries out all checks prior to employment ensuring that all information required in Schedule 1 has been obtained. Scrutiny of a sizable sample of staff files revealed full compliance with the required standards and regulations at this inspection. Criminal records Bureau checks are carried out every 3 years and records are kept about telephone enquiries to follow up references. Audit trails left on files revealed strict and robust systems ensuring the best possible detail and quality facts were available on staff files and that only suitable people were recruited to manage and work for the agency as required by NMS 3 and 15.

Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd previous joint Panel agreement with South Gloucestershire Social Services was reviewed in January 2005. Since then, the Bristol branch Panel business has been incorporated in to the organisations

own joint Fostering Panel also serving the regional offices in Cardiff and Carmarthen.

Membership was found to be in line with the requirements of Regulation 24 of the Fostering Service Regulations. Clear procedures are being followed to ensure the Panel also meets the requirements of regulation 26. File records for each member of the panel were inspected and comply with National Minimum Standard 30.3.

The panel meeting held in November 2005 was attended as part of this inspection. On the day the Panel was considering Applications from the West Wales, Bristol and South East Wales branch offices. Observation of Panel discussions included the consideration of approvals, resignations from fostering, amendments to registrations, a number of 'first reviews' and two 'temporary exemptions over numbers'.

Assessment expertise and the all important quality assurance function of the joint panel were found to be commendable. The panel checked that all the required references and checks had been completed for prospective carers and asked pertinent questions of assessing social workers and prospective carers. During all of the discussions members of the Panel demonstrated that they had considerable knowledge of the entire fostering process. It was noted that the panel was particularly thorough in their approach to approval of foster carers. The chair of the panel was able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the cases discussed. All members of the panel confirmed understanding of the fostering task and the needs of children looked after.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

13.

Pathway Care actively promotes and supports the educational achievement of children and young people and gives high priority to foster carers helping young people to achieve educational objectives. Statistical tools and procedures to monitor attainment, attendance and progress at school are still being developed.

EVIDENCE:

The agency does currently not hold detailed statistical evidence on the educational achievements of the children and young people placed with them. While this is also the case for 'health' and 'preparing for adulthood' outcomes the Quality Assurance Manager is now actively exploring ways to evidence achievements.

Nevertheless, there was good and robust evidence that the agency promotes educational attainment of children and young people and that high priority is given to helping foster carers to meet young peoples' educational needs.

Foster carer's roles in supporting children and young people are clearly laid out in the relevant policy document as well as the placement agreement. From the sample of children and young people that were case tracked at this inspection excellent arrangements were seen in place:

1. All the young people were in mainstream education.

2. Foster parents were very informed, positive and skilful in supporting young peoples educational needs.
3. All reported that they were given full support and back up by the respective FPSSW's in any matters relating to educational engagements and activities.
4. All foster carer's are encouraged to attend school activities, parent's evenings and keep all school reports.
5. Foster parents and FPSSW's attend when appropriate the Personal Education Planning Meetings with the schools involved and work in liaison with the ELAC teams to identify appropriate school placements.

Looking at the overall figures provided by the Quality Assurance (QA) Manager it became apparent, that the best way to illustrate the effectiveness of the current efforts by the agency lies in the outcome: All of the children and young people placed with Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd across all of the four regions are in full time educational placements.

A future inspection will want to focus on established procedures to monitor educational attainment, progress and school attendance of children and young people placed with foster carers. However, there was sufficient evidence to endorse that Pathway Care is currently largely compliant with Regulation 16 of The Fostering Services Regulation 2002 and that the agency was in the process of perfecting data based monitoring of statistical outcomes. A discussion paper entitled: "Enjoying Life and Learning, Enjoy and Achieve: Education" written by the QA Manager was scrutinized as part of this inspection. It contained detailed proposals on measurable values and individual outcome subjects.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10, 11.

The fostering service is able to make sure that each child or young person is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts. Children and young people, their families and all other significant people are consulted over relevant issues.

EVIDENCE:

The agency is aware of the fact that the information available for the guidance of foster parents in the Carers Handbook relating to contact is minimal. A review of the foster carers handbook is currently being undertaken with this area also being updated. The Manager confirmed that the guidance would include all of the elements suggested in NMS 10 for Fostering services and the agency was currently consulting on a proposed paper. This discussion document, "Contact – Maintaining links with Families", was available for inspection and detailed all of the NMS (National Minimum Standards) in question. It acknowledges a feeling shared by many foster parents: Managing contact is one of the hardest tasks facing foster carers and carers can expect to be given every help, guidance and practical support by the agency. Good practise evidencing this was seen throughout the agency:

Clear procedures are in place promoting and supporting contact. Details of these are clearly outlined and maintained in the 'Pathway Care Independent Fostering Services Placement Agreement'. This immediate placement agreement is completed and signed by the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker at the time of placement. It complies with and contains all information required by Schedule 6, Regulation 34 and ensures that all information is available even when the placement authority has not yet forwarded essential LAC information.

There was good evidence that risk assessments are carried out regarding all contact arrangements and possible supervision issues are clarified using this tool. Overriding requirements, such as court orders, are clearly published and known to all parties. Foster carers receive good quality practical support in order to be able to deal with difficult arrangements. Carers visited as part of this inspection verified this and also confirmed that preparation training for foster carers includes guidance on the promotion of contact.

A lengthy and in depth assessment on the way children and young people are consulted by the agency was conducted during the last inspection. The following positive findings are being confirmed:

1. The Manager stated that children's opinions would be sought through the system of Looked After Children (LAC) reviews, which supervising social workers will attend.
2. The supervising social worker confirmed that she speaks to the child and sees their room during their visits to the carers consulting on possible changes or wishes proposed by the child or young person.
3. There was evidence on file that relevant information has been shared with the young peoples social workers, which liaise with the child's parents.
4. The carers' training, the placement agreements, carers reviews were seen to emphasise the importance of seeking young peoples opinions on every aspect of their care. Training records confirmed training in counselling and listening skills.

During a longer discussion on the topic of 'meaningful consultation with children and young people' the Quality Assurance Manager highlighted efforts by the agency to ensure the views of children are heard and have a measurable outcome on all matters affecting them while in foster care. The Manager hopes to be able to provide the organisation with relevant tools in the course of the coming year.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

14.

Carers are positively supporting young people moving into independence. The agency is developing a more focused service for young people preparing to leave care.

EVIDENCE:

Like many service providers the agency experiences the increasing national trend towards having to provide and place older young people. In order to maximise outcomes as well as increase focus for this age group and in line with previously stated findings in other areas the agency is looking at ways to improve outcomes by developing systems for monitoring and reporting findings as detailed in 'Every Child Matters'.

Targets the agency considers highly relevant and wants to be measured against and focus on are:

1. A Placement Plan to be in place for all 15 year and over young people.
2. Increase and monitor numbers of young people being allocated 'personal advisors'.
3. Numbers progressing to higher education, college or further education.
4. Young people employed before leaving placement.
5. Number of staff and foster carers attending relevant training to be able to support transition issues.

A very small sample of two foster placements was case tracked through file study, following up questionnaires via telephone and personal interview. It was eminent that all parties were working positively with young people to prepare them for adult living. Largely successful relationships with the relevant local authority teams were in place to warrant a satisfactory implementation of independence training and Pathway planning. In the sample tracked cases the framework provided by the local authorities was robust and carers expressed optimism and positive engagement in the procedures. Family Placement Social Workers, other team members and carers were supporting young people who were moving towards independence.

At an organisational level the agency management stated that they were hoping to develop a more focused service in this area. With the increase in the number of placements being made on a long term/ permanent basis, this issue is going to need increased attention and planning.

Carers allowances and expenses (NMS 29) were not inspected on this occasion.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

The Bristol office is currently efficiently and effectively run fully within the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose. Training, supervision and general support is good for staff and foster carers alike Case records and general administrative record keeping is of an excellent standard.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive and clearly written document. It contains all the elements required in NMS 1.4.

Equally, the children's guide is a well-constructed booklet containing all the relevant information in an age appropriate format.

The Manager for Bristol is an experienced social worker. She holds a Diploma in Social Work, obtained 1994. She held significant social work posts with Bristol City Council and North Somerset before commencing to work as a Children Services Inspector with Bristol City Council and The National Care Standards Commission. She joined Pathway Care in 2003. She currently studies towards an MA in Management.

The staff group is made up of three social workers, one Family Outreach Worker and one administrator. All of three Family Placement Supervising Social Workers are qualified Social Workers. One has joined Pathway Care very recently. The job description of the manager and social work staff were scrutinized as part of this inspection. As with all other staff interviewed it could be confirmed that their duties and responsibilities were those described in their job description.

Social Work staff training needs are assessed and recorded on an ongoing basis. All staff interviewed felt that the service was providing them with every opportunity for training. Social workers described a great variety of training options available to them both on external as well as in-house training courses.

The administrator is held in particularly high esteem. The Bristol branch office heavily relies on her for her constant support and expertise. Overall, there was no doubt that the office is run very effectively and efficiently. There are written procedures for controlling the activities of the fostering service. There are written administrative and financial procedures in place. Information provided to purchasers is in line with NMS 4.4.

Levels of support and supervisions were seen to be good. The Manager manages the team's accountability for all duties and casework via supervisions. Records showed these to be at frequent intervals and of good quality. The Manager provides supervision for the whole of the small team. Lines of communication encompass managers, staff and carers. A number of team tools are used to focus on practise issues. These include regular team meetings. Minutes of meetings are kept.

Feed back from the group of approved carers visited during this inspection was positive about levels of contact and support. Supervision visits for carers are recorded and a checklist defines issues to be discussed. Supervising social workers caseloads are constantly under review to ensure maximum support

and input for carers. The fostering panel considers an Annual Review of the carers prepared and conducted by the Area Manager.

General feedback from carers indicated that they are satisfied with the training provided and are able to access other external training.

A comprehensive case record is maintained for each child and young person. These are kept at the highest possible professional standards and fully comply with NMS 24. Equally, the remainder of the fostering services administrative records contain all significant information and more than comply with NMS 25.

The headquarters for Pathway Care (Bristol) Ltd is located in a modern business park in Soundwell, South Gloucestershire. The agency occupies two floors of a unit in the park that provides office accommodation and a large meeting room. The meeting room allows for foster carer training and provides a meeting space for support groups and space for contact time to take place between children and their families. The office accommodation is adequate for the number of people currently employed within the agency. There was sufficient equipment to enable an efficient operation of the business. There was a certificate of insurance displayed.

Pathway Care Ltd provided the following as part of the pre-inspection documentation in order to evidence financial viability:

1. Financial Statements for year ended 31 March 2005 – The Directors' Report.
2. An Independent Auditors Report to the Shareholders of the Company.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	4
30	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	X
13	3
31	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	4
29	X

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	3
4	X
5	3
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	3
20	3
21	X
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	3
26	3
27	3
28	X
32	X

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	6.1, 6.6, 6.7.	Children or young people displaying traits dangerous to their health or wellbeing behaviour need to be thoroughly risk assessed. The written assessment needs to be made available to foster carers.

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